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ORATION

Pronounced at the

Mount Royal Cemetery

—BY—

H. C. SAINT PIERRE, ESQ. Q. C.

—ON—

DECORATION DAY

May 30th 1899.

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**MOUNT ROYAL CEMETERY**

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**H. C. SAINT PIERRE, Esq. Q. C.**

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ON DECORATION DAY

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MOUNT ROYAL CEMETERY

—BY—

H. C. SAINT-PIERRE, Esq. Q. C.

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ON DECORATION DAY,

30TH MAY 1899.

COMRADES :

Thirty-three years ago, on this anniversary of the month of May, a strange and striking sight was witnessed for the first time in every part of the American Union ; men, who, then, were yet in the full developement of their manhood, dressed in military garb, were seen filing on through streets and roadways, escorting chariots bedecked with the national colors, and loaded with the choicest and freshest flowers of spring.

Whither were they directing their steps ?

To the stranger or the uninitiated, this gorgeous pageant might have been mistaken for a triumphal ovation prepared for the purpose

of doing honor to some conquering hero returning from the field of Victory. Such, however, was not the object of this pageant. A higher and nobler purpose filled the minds of the men who had thus gathered together upon that memorable occasion. They were citizens who, remembering that but a few months previously they had been soldiers, were bending their steps toward "the silent camping ground" wherein reposed the bodies of those among their comrades whom the dark Angel of Death had smitten with his wings. Their object was to decorate their tombs with flowers and to remind their old friends whose spirit was still hovering over those graves, that they had not been forgotten. There, by the side of those tombs, they spoke together of days gone by. They talked of their battles, of their sufferings and of their devotion to their flag and to their country.

They spoke as if they had wished their departed friends to hear their voices; as if they had been in communion with them in their thoughts and their sentiments. They talked as if all their dead companions had been restored to life again, and as if they could yet share in their sorrows or participate in their joys. They talked as they were wont to do in old familiar times, when they

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were pressing forward with flags unfurled to meet the foe, or when by the side of the bivouac fire, after a stirring conflict, they recalled the various incidents of the day's battle. They talked of that which, both the dead and the living had once done, when together, in the dark and gloomy hours of defeat, or in the glowing and cheerful enthusiasm of triumph. And after sprinkling the tombs of their dead comrades with flowers, they returned to their homes, their breast filled with that gratifying impression which one experiences who has met an old long departed friend.

COMRADES, it is now over thirty years since this pious duty was performed for the first time. Every year the number of the participants in the pageant has become smaller. Every year, some of the old friends have failed to answer to their name at the "roll call"; but not once have the survivors omitted to perform this duty of visiting the last resting place of their departed comrades and of scattering flowers over their graves. You Comrades of the Hancock Post, I know, have never failed to it.

Many a change has taken place since the day when we were here together for the first time. The freshness of youth has long since departed from our cheeks; the body once erect is now slightly inclining towards the earth; the soldier-

ly bearing has lost some of its former spritleness; the hair has grown gray under the withering breath of time, but our hearts are still as warm as ever in their affection for our dead companions and as devoted to the cause which once brought us together under the same flag.

COMRADES, we have reached the matured epoch of our lives when one's thoughts are divided between the contemplation of the past and the prospect of the probable inheritance he has prepared for his children in the future. Let us pause for a moment to cast a look upon those past events. Have we done our duty them? Have we contributed our share, no matter how small, towards the accomplishment of the designs of Providence? Can it be said of us that we have been but a swarming multitude composed of undisciplined bands of destroyers of men, sowing death and devastation in their path, gloating over the agony of their fallen foes, the screaming despair of women and the tears of children? No Comrades, we were Christians soldiers fighting for a holy cause and like the Crusaders of old, who wielded their valiant swords in their efforts to free their enslaved brethren moaning under the foot of a ruthless conqueror, we devoted all our courage, summoned all our energy in the task of breaking to pieces the shackles by which three millions of

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human beings were kept in bondage. We fought for liberty and for humanity. We fought also for the preservation of that sacred compact by which the founders of the Republic had pledged themselves to the maintenance of a "government of the people, by the people and for the people," and had dedicated the fate of their country to the proposition that "every man was born free."

Have we faithfully accomplished our task? History which has recorded our labor and the grateful thanks of the nation and of the whole world have given to this question an answer far more forcible and in a language far more eloquent than I have at my command. I say "the whole world," because not only has the American Republic profited by our efforts, but the war in which we took part has induced a long stride forward in the onward march of civilisation. Humanity itself has been freed and the hideous chains of slavery have been shattered for ever. The year 1863 will mark out one of the most momentous events in the history of the world and of the human race; and a thousand years hence, History will repeat to the then rising generations that in that year, the disgraceful monster which bore the name of "slavery" was stifled out of existence,

and Humanity freed from its polluting grasps for ever.

We may therefore look into the past with satisfaction and with the consciousness that we have contributed something towards the advancement of mankind and the happiness of the generations which will live after us.

But if it be true to say that we have been useful to humanity and civilisation, in securing the abolition of slavery, it may be safely affirmed that we have not been less so, in maintaining the Union and the integrity of the Republic, and by the same effort, the great democratic principle of the sovereignty of the people which lies at its foundation and is the basis upon which it rests. The American Republic was the first one among all the republics known to the world which was founded upon the principle that *every man was born free and that the source of all power and of all sovereignty lies in the people and in the people only.* Athenes and Rome were both the centers of mighty republics in the olden time, but in neither of them was there a form of government such as is enjoyed by the American people. In Athenes, the Government was in the hands of rival factions, each of which employed all its

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power in controlling the will of the people. Every deliberation in matters of state was held in popular assemblies, wherein the influence of such orators as Demosthenes, Eschines, Themistocles and Cimon very often carried the day, and even so at times when their own personal objects were in direct conflict with the interest of the nation. The result of such a system was that the Republic was in perpetual quarrels with its neighbours and when called upon to defend its territory, it became an easy pray to the invador. Rome exhibited more unity of purpose and greater strength in action, but its government was almost exclusively in the hands of a privileged class which was distinct from the rest of the people and formed a real aristocracy. Its Senate which was its only deliberative body was composed exclusively of that class. The mass of the people had but the negative power of Veto which lost its authority when opposed by the more potent influence of the Patriciens.

The world owes to the genius of the founders of the American Republic to have framed a system of government based upon the sovereignty of the people and in which the people is called upon to take their shere in the government by

means of their President, their elective Senate and their house of Representatives. So perfect was this form of Government found to be, that since the date of its establishment in America, the principles upon which it is founded have revolutionized the whole of the civilized world; and to day, with the exception of Russia, there is not a country in Europe wherein responsible Government based upon the sovereignty of the people, has not been accepted and is not actually put into active operation.

COMRADES, it is our pride to have contributed to the defence of the constitution framed by the founders of the American Republic and, by maintaining the Union, we may confidently affirm that we have saved those principles which are dear to every lover of freedom from being cast aside, and republican government based upon Democracy, from being swept away from the face of the earth. This, Comrades, is the work we have accomplished. It is by this work in the past that we have helped the hand of Providence in preparing the happy future which we desire our children to enjoy.

The war once over, the deadly strife once ended, every member of this immense army from

ir elective Senate the highest commander down to the drummer
tives. So perfect boy, every one returned with joy to his former
found to be, that peaceful occupation, happy and satisfied to have
ment in America, contributed his share in the restoration of peace
founded have re- and the consolidation of the Republic.

civilized world ; In our boyish days we were taught to look
n of Russia, there upon Cincinnatus, Scipio and Cato as men
erein responsible worthy of our admiration, because they con-
overeignty of the sented to return to their former peaceful occupa-
nd is not actually tions after they had vainquished the enemies of

have contributed their country ; but Comrades what else did our
n framed by the leaders do but follow the example set to them
epublic and, by by those great citizens of Rome? And what say
onfidently affirm you of the magnanimity and the patriotic devo-
ples which are tion of Mead who but a few months after he had
from being cast won the greatest battle of the war at the head of
ent based upon the army of the Potomac submitted to serve un-
away from the der Grant, who was, by several years, his junior?
es, is the work What say you of Sherman who would not con-
y this work in sent to be appointed Lieutenant-General, because he
hand of Pro- was in fear that General Grant, his superior officer
ture which we might be displeased at finding him his equal in
rank? What say you of the same officer whose
strategic science had contributed more than any-
thing else in bringing the war to a succesful
issue, refusing persistantly to accept for his

services any reward beyond his regulation pay. bred
 Instances are numberless of self sacrifices and serve
 patriotism on the part of both officers and men the V
 among those who fought on our side during the equip
 war of secession. But I again repeat: is this all wome
 which was done by the armies of the Republic? sick a
 We brought the war to a succesful issue; We necess
 saved the Union, and with it, the principles of Such
 democratic Governement; the war over, we laid Grand
 down our arms and resumed the labors of peace; and s
 have we stop there? Was that all we did? No spirit
 Comrades — We did more — We formed this disting
 mighty organisation called "The Grant Army of mainta
 The Republic" based upon fraternity and charity, organi
 which has everywhere covered the land with its rising
 good work and which is now perpetuating itself childre
 in the children of the veteran soldiers. In our fostere
 ranks we have admitted that admirable associa- selves
 tion of women known as "The Relief Corps," Wh
 which has done so much during the war for the have
 assistance of the sick and wounded, and whose influen
 benevolence has often reached even to the very visiting
 heart of those dreadful prisons wherein so many and of
 of us had to face sickness, starvation and death. has bee
 In the Sons of Veterans, the Government has ly cher
 found ready material for its late war with Spain. become
 They found a whole generation of young men

s regulation pay, bred in the school of patriotism and eager to
 self sacrifices and serve their Country as their fathers had done. In
 officers and men the Women's Relief Corps, they found a fully
 r side during the equipped and thoroughly organised association of
 repeat : is this all women trained to give assistance and relief to the
 of the Republic? sick and wounded and ready to take the field if
 cesful issue; We necessary.

he principles of Such Comrades has been the work of the
 var over, we laid Grand Army of the Republic. It has perpetuated
 labors of peace; and spread throughout the Country the same
 all we did? No spirit of patriotism and self sacrifice which had
 We formed this distinguished them during the war. It has
 Grant Army of maintained its military character, and through an
 nity and charity, organisation similar to their own among the
 he land with its rising generation and more particularly among
 perpetuating itself children of veterans, they have arouse and
 ldiers. In our fostered the same spirit with which they them-
 mirable associa- selves are animated.

Relief Corps," While doing their duty to the living, they
 the war for the have not forgotten the dead, and through the
 led, and whose influence of their organisation, the duty of
 en to the very visiting the resting place of their dead comrades
 herein so many and of decorating their tombs on this anniversary
 ion and death. has become so universally observed and so found-
 overnment has ly cherished by the whole population that it has
 ar with Spain. become a national holiday in the Republic.
 of young men

Comrades we, as members of the G. A. R. have met to day to perform this pious duty of doing honor to our dead Comrades. Let us on this day sacred to their memory throw our minds back to the days when they were our companions in the ranks of the army both in the moments of sufferings or in the hours of joy. Let us revive in our recollections their deeds of bravery, their acts of patriotism for their country and of kindness and brotherly devotion to their Comrades.

Their race of life is now run, their last battle has been fought. They have closed their eyes to sleep, never to wake again. In that eternal sleep let them rest in peace.

Comrades, whilst performing this sacred duty towards our dead companions and while thus speaking of what we have done in our young days in the American Republic, let us not forget that we are Canadians, and that we also are living in a free country. Let us not forget that our first and dearest affections are for those who are nearer to our hearts, and that what we did elsewhere many years ago for the defence of the liberties and the right of others, we would be ready to do again for the defence of our own flag and the protection of our own country. Loyalty and fidelity are the two cardinal virtues of a

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of the G. A. R. this pious duty of comrades. Let us only throw our minds to our companions in the moments of Let us revive of bravery, their country and of kindness. Their Comrades. their last battle shed their eyes to that eternal sleep

this sacred duty and while thus we in our young let us not forget that we also are not forget that for those who what we did defence of the we would be of our own flag try. Loyalty al virtues of a

soldier, and nowhere should those virtues be expected to find a more sacred shrine than in the hearts of those who are called upon to defend the soil upon which they were born. But why speak of the defence of our soil? Who are our enemies? Are not England and America united together to spread throughout the world the good work of civilisation? Are they not actually extending to one another the hand of friendship? Have we not seen lately the banner of St. George and the Stars and Stripes floating side by side or entwined together? Oh! Canadians, my countrymen, let us bless Providence that our home is in a land of freedom under the fostering care of a kind but mighty nation; but let us also thank Heaven that we are living by the side of the great Republic which has done so much for the liberty of mankind and whose friendship is to us a guarantee that for many years to come our country will enjoy prosperity and peace.

